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JGJr: 06-03

Paper No: 7

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JUN 09 2003

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

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KNOXVILLE TN 37917

In re Application of:

LeVert, et al.

Filed: 9 August, 2001

Application No. 09/924,829

Docket No. (None)

ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition filed herein via FAX on 28 and 29 May, 2003, under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b)¹ alleging unintentional delay, and in light of the allegations considered as a request to withdraw the holding of abandonment under 37 C.F.R. §1.181.²

¹ Effective December 1, 1997, the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) now provide that where the delay in reply was unintentional, a petition may be filed to revive an abandoned application or a lapsed patent pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b). a grantable petition filed under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) must be accompanied by:

(1) the required reply, unless previously filed. In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

(2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.17(m);

(3) a statement that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) was unintentional. The Commissioner may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional; and

(4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(c). (Emphasis supplied.)

² The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.181 provide, in pertinent part:
§1.181 Petition to the Commissioner.

(a) Petition may be taken to the Commissioner: (1) From any action or requirement of any examiner in the *ex parte* prosecution of an application which is not subject to appeal to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences or to the court; (2) In cases in which a statute or the rules specify that the matter is to be determined directly by or reviewed by the Commissioner; and (3) To invoke the supervisory authority of the Commissioner in appropriate circumstances. * * *

(b) Any such petition must contain a statement of the facts involved and the point or points to be reviewed and the action requested. Brief or memoranda, if any, in support thereof should accompany or be embodied in the petition; and where facts are to be proven, the proof in the form of affidavits or declaration (and exhibits, if any) must accompany the petition.

© When a petition is taken from an action or requirement of an examiner in the *ex parte* prosecution of an application, it may be required that there have been a proper request for reconsideration (§1.111) and a repeated action by the examiner. The examiner may be directed by the Commissioner to furnish a written statement, within a specified time, setting forth the reasons for his decision upon the matters averred in the petition, supplying a copy thereof to the petitioner.

(d) Where a fee is required for a petition to the Commissioner the appropriate section of this part will so indicate. If any required fee does not

The petition:

- as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 is **GRANTED** and the petition fee is waived; and
- under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) is **DISMISSED as moot**.

BACKGROUND

The record indicates that:

- it appeared that the Applicant failed to file a timely and proper response to the Notice to File Corrected Application Papers mailed on 13 September, 2001, with a reply due (absent an extension of time) on or before 13 November, 2001;
- Notice of Abandonment was mailed on 16 May, 2003;
- contemporaneously with the instant petition, Petitioner submitted copies of:
 - his docket/notebook records reflecting materials forwarded to and received from the Office in the context of prosecution of the instant applications; and
 - his reply to the 13 September, 2001, Notice to File Corrected Application Papers (the "reply requirement under 37 C.F.R. §1.137).

STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Congress has authorized the Commissioner to "revive an application if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." 35 U.S.C. §133 (1994).³

The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) and (b) set forth the requirements for a petitioner to revive

accompany the petition, the petition will be dismissed. * * *

(f) Except as otherwise provided in these rules, any such petition not filed within 2 months from the action complained of, may be dismissed as untimely. The mere filing of a petition will not stay the period for reply to an Examiner's action which may be running against an application, nor act as a stay of other proceedings. * * * (Emphasis supplied.)

³ 35 U.S.C. §133 provides:

35 U.S.C. §133 Time for prosecuting application.

Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Commissioner in such action, the application shall be regarded as abandoned by the parties thereto, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that such delay was unavoidable.

a previously unavoidably or unintentionally, respectively, abandoned application under this congressional grant of authority. The language of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is clear, unambiguous, and without qualification: the delay in tendering the reply to the outstanding Office action, as well as filing the first petition seeking revival, must have been unavoidable for the reply now to be accepted on petition.⁴

Delays in responding properly raise the question whether delays are unavoidable.⁵ Where there is a question whether the delay was unavoidable, Petitioners must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).⁶

And the Petitioner must be diligent in attending to the matter.⁷

(Moreover, it long has been the position of the Office that the use of the filing periods (such as in 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b)) as an "extension of time" is an "abuse" of the procedures for reviving abandoned applications, and is contrary to the meaning and intent of the regulation.⁸ The Office has indicated that petitions to revive must be filed promptly after the applicant becomes aware of the abandonment.⁹ Such does not constitute the care required under Pratt, and so cannot satisfy the test for diligence and due care.

(By contrast, unintentional delays are those that do not satisfy the very strict statutory and regulatory requirements of unavoidable delay, and also, by definition, are not intentional.¹⁰))

⁴ Therefore, by example, an unavoidable delay in the payment of the Filing Fee might occur if a reply is shipped by the US Postal Service, but due to catastrophic accident, the delivery is not made.

⁵ See: *Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice*, 62 *Fed. Reg.* at 53158-59 (October 10, 1997), 1203 *Off. Gaz. Pat. Office* at 86-87 (October 21, 1997).

⁶ See: *In re Application of G*, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989).

⁷ See: *Diligence in Filing Petitions to Revive and Petitions to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment*, 1124 *Off. Gaz. Pat. Office* 33 (March 19, 1991). It was and is Petitioner's burden to exercise diligence in seeking either to have the holding of abandonment withdrawn or the application revived. See 1124 *Off. Gaz. Pat. Office supra*.

⁸ See: *In re Application of S*, 8 USPQ2d 1630, 1632 (Comm'r Pats. 1988). Where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional, the petitioner must meet a burden of establishing that the delay was unintentional within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b). See: *In re Application of G*, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989).

⁹ See: *Diligence in Filing Petitions to Revive and Petitions to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment*, 1124 *Off. Gaz. Pat. Office* 33 (March 19, 1991). It was and is Petitioner's burden to exercise diligence in seeking either to have the holding of abandonment withdrawn or the application revived. See 1124 *Off. Gaz. Pat. Office supra*.

¹⁰ Therefore, by example, an unintentional delay in the reply might occur if the reply and transmittal form are to be prepared for shipment by the US Postal Service, but other pressing matters distract one's attention and the mail is not timely deposited for shipment.

The courts have determined the construct for properly supporting a petition seeking withdrawal of a holding of abandonment.¹¹

As to the Request to Withdraw
the Holding of Abandonment

Petitioner makes a satisfactory showing of non-receipt.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, the petition:

- as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 to withdraw the holding of abandonment hereby is **granted**, the 16 May, 2003, Notice of Abandonment is **vacated**, and the petition fee is waived; and
- under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) is **dismissed as moot**.

The instant application is being forwarded to OIPE for further processing before being forwarded for examination in due course.

Telephone inquiries concerning this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (703) 305-9199.



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¹¹ See: Delgar v. Schulver, 172 USPQ 513 (D.D.C. 1971).